



State of California
Respiratory Care Board

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- Inquiries:**
- (1) Is it within the scope of practice, under California licensing laws and regulations, for a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner ("RCP") to remove a life-sustaining respirator from a patient pursuant to a physician's order?
 - (2) Is it within the scope of practice, under California licensing laws and regulations, for an RCP to remove a life sustaining gastrostomy feeding tube from a patient pursuant to a physician's order?
 - (3) Assuming the answer(s) to question 1 and/or 2 is "yes", are there any steps that a hospital must take in order to allow RCPs to remove respirators and/or gastrostomy tubes from patients? For example, must the hospital have a written policy and procedures in place governing RCPs and removal of life-support? Do any particular supervision requirements apply?
 - (4) Has the Respiratory Care Board issued any written policies or guidance regarding the role of RCPs in terminating life support?

Responses: It is our assessment that the function you inquired about would be classified as follows:

The act of removing a life sustaining respirator from a patient pursuant to a physician's order by a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner is classified as 1A (Nearly verbatim from the Respiratory Care Practice Act.)

However, the presence of a physician's order to remove or withdrawal life support is not sufficient documentation to allow an RCP to perform this function unless all legal requirements pertaining to such a function have been met. Such requirements would include, but are not necessarily limited to, compliance with the Health Care Decisions Law (contained in Probate Code section 4600 *et seq.*)

We recommend that you contact the California Department of Health Services to receive legal clarification on this matter. They can be reached at:

Department of Health Services
714 / 744 "P" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-4171

The act of removing a life-sustaining gastrostomy feeding tube from a patient pursuant to physician's order is classified as 3A (Not prohibited verbatim by the Respiratory Care Practice Act but, in the Respiratory Care Board's judgment, inferred as prohibited).

The Respiratory Care Board does not regulate hospitals or their policies. We would again direct you to the Department of Health Services for response to inquiries concerning the responsibilities of hospitals.

Finally, the Respiratory Care Board has not considered or issued any written policies of guidance regarding the role of RCPs in terminating life support.

Reference # 2002-C-01